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**U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE CHARLENE BARSHEFSKY AND SECRETARY OF
COMMERCE WILLIAM M. DALEY PRESS INDIA TO OPEN SODA ASH MARKET**

U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky and Secretary of Commerce William M. Daley released a joint letter today to Indian Minister of Commerce and Industry Murasoli Maran outlining their concerns over Indian practices preventing the U.S. soda ash industry from exporting to India.

“U.S. soda ash is being shut out of the Indian market . The letter we sent to Minister Maran reflects the Administration’s continued commitment to fair and equitable treatment of U.S. products abroad,” said Ambassador Barshefsky.

“Improved market access for all U.S. products overseas is a high priority for the United States,” said Commerce Secretary William M. Daley. “Free and fair trade is the cornerstone of this Administration’s trade policy, and resolving the soda ash issue would be an important step in expanding our growing commercial relationship with India.”

U.S. natural soda ash is mined in a pure form, at low cost. It is of the highest quality and is sought by glass manufacturers worldwide, including India’s glass industry. However, a *de facto* embargo on soda ash has been maintained by the Indian government as a result of a temporary injunction imposed by the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC) in 1996.

In addition to the *de facto* embargo, India’s 1999-2000 budget raised import tariffs on soda ash to 38.5 percent, making it the highest in the world. The tariff, along with other import fees, yields an unacceptable 69.9 percent burden on U.S. soda ash exports. The American Natural Soda Ash Corporation (ANSAC) has estimated that India would have to lower its import tariffs on soda ash to 12 percent before U.S. soda ash producers could compete effectively in the Indian market. This action would result in a reduction in the net effective import fee to 38.92 percent (12% tariff, plus 10% surcharge plus 18% countervailing duty plus 4% special import fee).

An industry petition filed under the Generalized System of Preference program is also under active review.

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